

# Brookline Preservation Commission Demolition Application Report

Address: 161 Clyde Street

Petitioner: Trustees of the 161 Clyde Street Real Estate Trust

Building types: house

National Register Listing (if Applicable): n/a

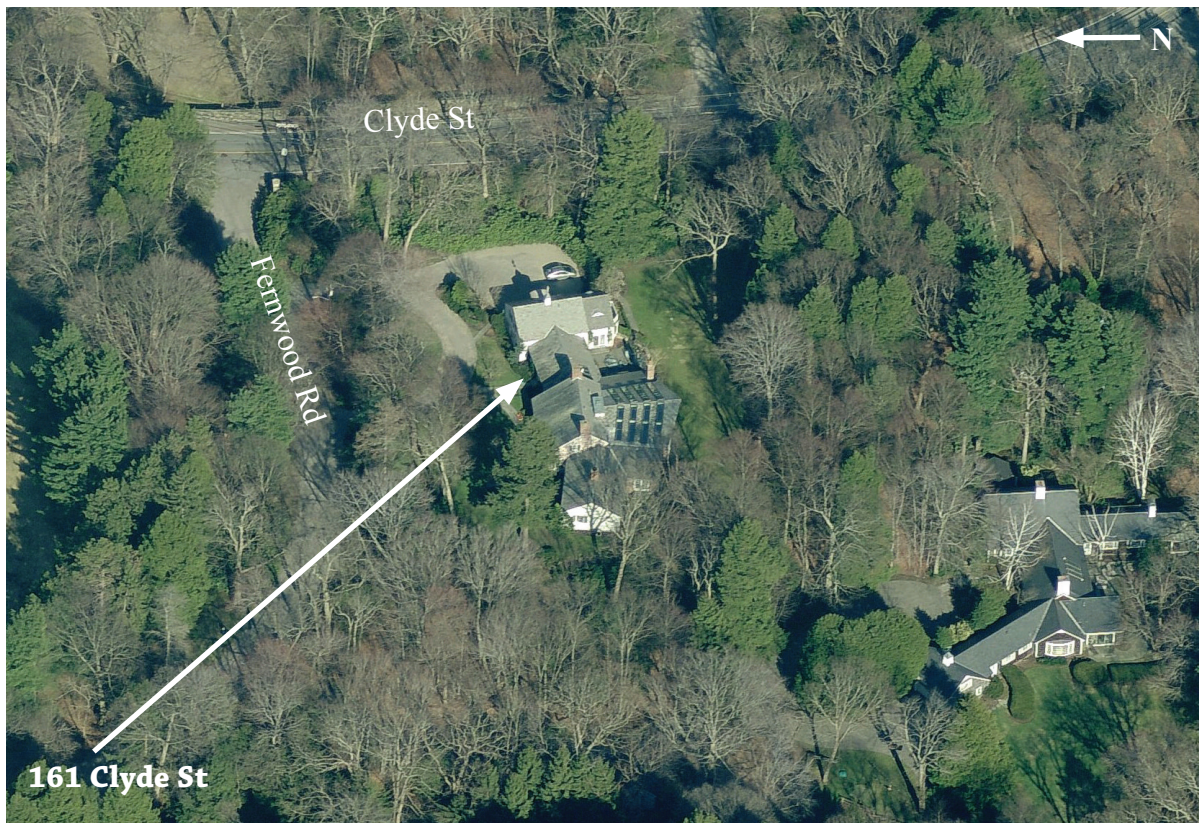


## Historical/Architectural Significance:

This Royal Barry Wills and Associates' designed house was permitted to be built in 1958, making it a late example of Wills' work in Brookline. The builder was Wellington Ross of Melrose and the original owner, Richard Paige, lived on Seaver Street. The generously-size and wooded lot is at the corner of Clyde Street and Fernwood Road and abuts the Country Club. The house originally had a 14 Fernwood Road address and was among the first houses to be constructed on the subdivided land of the Fernwood estate.

Character-defining features include the prominent end chimneys, cedar shake roof and large multi-pane windows on the main house. The garage is sided with clapboards in contrast to the multi-colored brickwork of the house and center wing. The house was renovated and expanded at least once in the early 1990s when an addition was built to the back of the main house and the garage was altered.





Boston-based architect Royal Barry Wills (1895-1962) is widely recognized as the preeminent architect of suburban houses from the 1920s through the early 1960s. Raised in Melrose, Wills graduated from MIT in 1918, having trained as a marine engineer, and worked as a design engineer for Turner Construction Company of Boston beginning in 1919. He left Turner and opened his architecture office in 1925. Wills received his first major award, the First Regional Prize in Herbert Hoover's National Better Homes Competition, in 1929. He won the gold medal in the same contest in 1932, for the Brookline house now known as 37 Weybridge Lane (originally known as Gardner Path, 1930). Wills designed the house as a wedding present for Maurice A. Dunlavy (1896-1994), the builder with whom Wills frequently collaborated. The MHC MAC-RIS database shows Wills-designed houses in at least twenty-five cities and towns in Massachusetts, including Brookline. Other Wills-designed and Dunlavy-built houses in Brookline include twenty-six houses in Blake Park, starting with 78 Stanton Road in 1926, Lowell Road from 1927 to 1929, and houses on Hancock Road, Welland Road, and Weybridge Lane from 1930 to 1933. During the 1930s, Wills won at least eight competitive awards in national contests, and had feature articles appear in *Life* magazine, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and other publications. He published eight books from 1940 to 1957, including *Houses for Good Living* (1940), *Houses for Homemakers* (1945), and *Living on the Level* (1955). The residence at 41 Codman Road is illustrated in *Houses for Good Living*. His chief assistants, Merton S. Barrows and Robert E. Minot, were MIT alumni who joined him in the firm in the mid-1930s. Warren J. Rhoter joined the office in 1948, and Richard Wills, son of Royal Barry Wills, in 1952. The firm, which became Royal Barry Wills and Associates in 1957, later published another volume, *More Houses for Good Living* (1968), which includes illustrations of 165 Sargent Road. In 1954, Wills was elected a fellow in the American Institute of Architects. At the time of his death, he was working on his autobiography and helping to design one of three model houses to be featured at the New York World's Fair in 1964.





The house at 161 Clyde Street meets the following criteria for an initial determination of significance:

c. The building is associated with one or more significant historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the Town or Commonwealth; and

d. The building is historically or architecturally significant in terms of its period, style, method of construction, or its association with a significant architect or builder, either by itself or as part of a group.

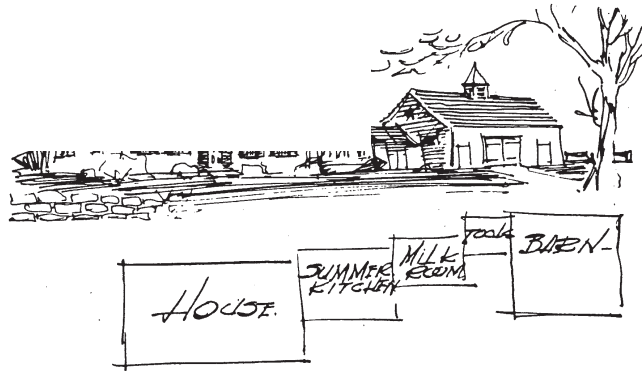
The house retains its integrity in terms of its location setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling and association. Although altered and expanded, the house retains its colonial revival style and farmhouse typology.



Royal Barry Wills

garage at 161 Clyde





Colonial Houses had many dependencies - at least the farm houses did.  
Cape Cod houses were often Captains houses & so did not have as many sheds as, say, New Hampshire Houses -

Royal Barry Wills sketches of traditional New England house types, with (top) the main house attached to a barn (garage) by a series of wings (often breezeways) he termed summer kitchen, milk room and tool shed



garage, connecting wing and main house  
at 161 Clyde Street



37 Weybridge Lane (formerly 12 Gardner Path)

From *Blake Park: Brookline, Massachusetts: History of a Neighborhood, 1916-2005: The Houses and People of Blake Park*  
by Ken Liss <<http://blakepark.muddyriver.us/37weybridgeln.html>>

Builder Maurice Dunlavy and architect Royal Barry Wills had already worked together on more than a dozen Blake Park houses by the time they began construction of this award-winning house for Dunlavy and his wife Mary in the fall of 1930.

The house was about halfway up Gardner Path, the stairway leading up Aspinwall Hill from Washington Street to Hancock Road. It carried the address 12 Gardner Path until 1933 or 1934. By that time a new street, Weybridge Lane (with three other Dunlavy/Wills houses), had been extended from Gardner Path to Weybridge Road. The address was then changed to 37 Weybridge Lane.

Wills had been entering his houses in architectural competitions since the mid-1920s, seeing in them an opportunity, win or lose, to promote his name and his work. In 1929, he had won a regional first place award in the annual Better Homes in America small house competition. In 1932, he entered the Dunlavy house in the same competition and was awarded the Gold Medal for the best small house in the country.

“The first prize plan by Mr. Wills,” said the award committee (as reported in February 26, 1933 edition of the New York Times) shows great charm, expresses the spirit of the locality in which it is built, has a fine scale and composition and shows good use of materials. It has an air of domesticity and shows great care in the manner in which all detail has been brought together. There is a good, frank use of chimneys and a fine handling of the entrance terrace.

This one-and-a-half story plan is compact and well arranged. There is a fine relation of rooms combined with economic and efficient circulation. The library is arranged with real privacy. The second floor hall occupies the minimum amount of space and yet this small home has ample-sized rooms.

Wills and Dunlavy were responsible for 24 other houses in Blake Park in addition to this one. Maurice Dunlavy (1896-1994) and his wife Mary (1903-1979) lived in this house for only four years.